

**REGIONAL COOPERATION IN A  
CHANGING WORLD:  
A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS FOR  
THE MIAMI VALLEY FIRE/EMS ALLIANCE**

EXECUTIVE PLANNING

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## ABSTRACT

The problem was that the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance's services were not all up-to-date; they did not adequately address the needs of its membership in a rapidly changing economic and political environment. The purpose of this Applied Research Project, using the action research methodology, was to provide a foundation for a new strategic plan for the Alliance, and a resulting update of Alliance services, by answering the following research questions:

1. *Who is the primary target customer for the Alliance?*
2. *What should the mission of the Alliance be?*
3. *What are some of the services that the Alliance could reasonably provide in the future?*

These questions were answered using *Compression Planning*, a modified storyboarding process. In three separate planning sessions, the Alliance conducted a SWOTT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and trends) analysis on the first day; a general direction setting process using a scenario approach on the second day; and, on the third day, they directly addressed and answered the three research questions listed above.

The results indicated that the Alliance has two primary target customer groups – *Local Governments* and *Member Fire Departments* (Question #1). There was no consensus to change the current mission statement, but there was a clear understanding that city managers and township and village administrators will emphasize return-on-investment while evaluating Alliance performance in the future (Question #2). Finally, a range of potential Alliance services was identified as clearly appropriate for the Alliance to pursue (e.g., Hazmat Team oversight),

clearly inappropriate (e.g., emergency management oversight) or, in most cases, somewhere in between (Question #3).

As it is inappropriate to conduct a full, traditional strategic planning process in times as uncertain as the Alliance now faces, the project stopped short of developing a complete strategic plan. Rather, the project recommended that the Alliance Executive Director and Executive Committee take the information developed in this process and use it as a foundation to complete the planning process. They must create a flexible strategic plan, and associated implementation plans, with multiple contingencies in place so they can respond accordingly – i.e., quickly and flexibly – in their uncertain environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance (Alliance) is a consortium of twenty-four fire departments in the greater Dayton area of southwest Ohio. It was created as a council of governments in 1995 to take advantage of the effectiveness, efficiency and economies of scale of a large organization (Alexander, 1996; Regional Council of Governments, 1967; also see Appendix A, a recent fact sheet about the Alliance, for more information). The Alliance is also the sponsoring agency for Ohio Task Force One, one of FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue Teams.

The Alliance has provided a range of services to its member departments since its inception. One of the most valuable has been to exercise the purchasing power that membership provides. Members have joined together to purchase apparatus, tools and equipment, hose and appliances, supplies and services. They have saved many thousands of dollars through this process over the years.

Several issues and events have prompted the Alliance's new Executive Director and its Executive Committee to question if the Alliance is providing the right services in the current environment and for the future. And, while a Strategic Plan is in place, it is not up-to-date and it is in obvious need of revision (Miami Valley Fire EMS Alliance, 2000; see the current plan in Appendix B).

September 11, 2001 provided the impetus for all fire, rescue and emergency medical service organizations to reexamine their services and operations. Locally, this need was brought home emphatically by Ohio Task Force One's activation and response to the World Trade Center. The Alliance has completely revamped the Team's administration, expanded its statewide representation, and is continuing to implement changes based largely on lessons

learned from that activation and its aftermath. The expanding emphasis on Homeland Security and Weapons of Mass Destruction will be an even greater influence, in the long run, on the Alliance and all of its members.

An additional issue is the State of Ohio's expanding cooperative purchasing program. Ohio currently has active bids available for emergency medical equipment and medic units (i.e., ambulances). Since the vendors cannot sell their products anywhere in Ohio for a lower price than is available through the state, this program has taken precedence over the Alliance bidding process for members who need to purchase these items. As their program expands, the joint purchasing power of the Alliance will probably become less of an inducement for membership than it is now, at least as it is currently administered (Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program, 2002).

The other significant issue for the Alliance is the current state of the economy, especially in the Miami Valley (Bebbington, 2002 and Bischoff, 2002). Even when the nation's economy was enjoying good times through much of the 1990's, not all Miami Valley communities shared in this boom (City of Dayton, 1999). Several area cities are now facing severe financial problems making it imperative to cut costs wherever possible. Economic hard times also make it crucial for the Alliance to provide useful, cost-effective services to its member departments. If the Alliance cannot demonstrate significant cost-savings and membership benefits for participating communities, its continued existence cannot be guaranteed.

In this economic and political environment, the Alliance must provide the most appropriate services possible. Accordingly, the problem this Applied Research Project addresses is that Alliance services, as its Executive Director and Executive Committee clearly understand, are not all up-to-date. The Alliance must change its operations to meet local needs in this

changed and changing environment; they must be able to demonstrate how Alliance membership provides a positive return on investment for member communities; and they must make these changes in a timely manner. The Alliance is aware they do not have the luxury of instituting slow, gradual change; the change will be significant and it must happen soon. The purpose of this project, using the action research methodology as defined by the National Fire Academy (1998, p. 3-28), is to assist in this process by answering the following research questions:

1. *Who is the primary target customer for the Alliance?* The Alliance cannot properly satisfy its customer's needs and desires if it does not know with some certainty who the customer is.
2. *What should the mission of the Alliance be?* The changing environment makes it critical for the Alliance to review its mission and make adjustments accordingly. Of course, the question above must be answered before this question can reasonably be addressed. A mission may sound very appropriate and reasonable but, if it does not address a primary customer, it may not be the right mission at the right time.
3. *What are some of the services that the Alliance could reasonably provide in the future?*  
Which ones could be instituted with the least resistance and which ones would provide the greatest return on investment? These questions, in effect, address a vision for the future of the Alliance.

It should be obvious that this is only the first step in the Alliance's planning process. After these research questions have been answered, the Alliance still needs to develop a structured and comprehensive strategic plan, with multiple contingencies identified according to future environmental changes, and then an appropriate implementation plan. The answers to the above questions will provide a foundation for these future strategic planning activities.

It is widely recognized that a traditional strategic planning process is not appropriate in an uncertain, rapidly changing environment. Standard planning cycles, decision-making processes and normal budget cycles limit an organization's ability to respond in a timely manner in uncertain environments. An organization must be able to "change directions quickly in response to – or in anticipation of – new opportunities or threats" (Courtney, 2001, p. 5-10, 137). As Bryson has noted, "If strategic planning is undertaken in such a situation, it should probably be a focused, limited effort..." (Bryson, 1995, p. 8). As such is the case, the Alliance Executive Director, working with the Executive Committee, will complete these additional steps outside of the structured planning sessions used to provide these answers.

Finally, the Alliance will still need to develop annual work plans and related budgets, with contingencies identified and flexibility built in. Strategic planning can't be a one-time project. It must become an integral part of the organization's operations. Annual reviews and adjustments, along with real-time monitoring, must be institutionalized as well.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance was the product of a four-year developmental process initiated in 1991 by Huber Height's (OH) Fire Chief Tom Grile. The original planning group's purpose was to investigate combining certain local government functions. Specifically, area fire departments wanted to examine the possibility of joining together in some manner to take advantage of the various benefits a larger organization might provide (Alexander, 1996). Glenn Alexander, the Dayton (OH) Fire Department's former Fire Chief, also figured prominently in this process and served as the Alliance's first Director/Coordinator. While there was some concern in the beginning that the Alliance was intended to become a regional fire



department, that was never the case. Local autonomy was guaranteed from the start and has never been threatened.

The planning group chose to form the Alliance as a council of governments. Councils of government, under Ohio law, may include any governmental entities including cities, villages, townships and counties. Councils of government themselves are also governmental entities and, as can be seen in the partial text of the law quoted below, they have a wide range of potential powers:

(A) The council shall have the power to:

- (1) Study such area governmental problems common to two or more members of the council as it deems appropriate, including but not limited to matters affecting health, safety, welfare, education, economic conditions, and regional development;
  - (2) Promote cooperative arrangements and coordinate action among its members, and between its members and other agencies of local or state governments, whether or not within Ohio, and the federal government;
  - (3) Make recommendations for review and action to the members and other public agencies that perform functions within the region;
  - (4) Promote cooperative agreements and contracts among its members or other governmental agencies and private persons, corporations, or agencies;
  - (5) Perform planning directly by personnel of the council, or under contracts between the council and other public or private planning
- (Regional Councils of Governments, 1967).

The Alliance is funded by a twenty-four cent per capita annual charge to member communities. While this form of organization and funding provides many benefits for the Alliance, it also leaves it vulnerable to economic uncertainties. As with most private enterprises, but unlike most governmental entities, the Alliance must be able to demonstrate an economic payback, or its long term existence cannot be guaranteed.

The Alliance has historically provided most of its services through a committee structure mirroring the service areas provided by most member fire departments, e.g., Suppression, EMS, and Training Committees. Some of the Alliance's successes have come from working with Sinclair Community College in Dayton (OH) to help institute a Fire Academy program; providing networking opportunities for member departments; administering a joint purchasing program; assisting with the development and management of Ohio Task Force One; instituting a regional Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) program; creating a charitable arm to the Alliance – a 501 (c)(3) organization – to assist member departments in receiving charitable contributions; and establishing a communications agreement between the Alliance and Montgomery County (OH).

What has changed so much to cause the Alliance to institute this planning/change process? The most obvious influence was the terrorist attacks on our country. The world changed on September 11, 2001. That statement has become almost a cliché, but it is nonetheless very true for many people. It is especially relevant for fire and emergency medical service personnel in the United States. As the sponsoring agency for Ohio Task Force One, the Alliance is intimately involved in the resulting changes in FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue Response System. The Homeland Security and Weapons of Mass Destruction initiatives promise to have an even greater and longer lasting influence on the American fire service.

As discussed in the Introduction, economic issues are another primary influence in this process. One of the most important benefits of Alliance membership has been the joint purchasing power the Alliance has provided. This is still an important Alliance function, but the State of Ohio has expanded its own Cooperative Purchasing Program whereby any governmental entity in Ohio may participate for a minimal fee. They are working to expand this program to include fire apparatus. As their program expands, this will almost certainly lead to a reduction in the Alliance's joint purchasing program and resulting financial benefits (Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program, 2002).

Further, the economy in the Miami Valley is suffering along with much of the rest of the country, and there is no quick end to the economic downturn in sight (Bebbington, 2002 and Krugman, 2002). One member fire department has recently been directed to reduce their annual budget by five percent. With an already tight budget, this department felt compelled to send a letter saying they have to withdraw from the Alliance due to financial difficulties.

Another impetus for this planning process comes from a change in leadership of the Alliance. The current Executive Director was hired part-time in March of this year and he did not start full-time with the Alliance until the end of May, after his retirement from the Dayton Fire Department. His first priority was to make immediate changes in the Ohio Task Force One administration as discussed in the Introduction. As this process was under way, he also studied the Alliance's past, evaluated its current operations and condition, and tried to forecast the Alliance's future under as many different scenarios and possible contingencies as time allowed.

In this environment, the Alliance must provide effective services to member departments, with demonstrable cost-savings, or its long-term viability will be threatened. The Alliance must move quickly to implement new strategies. Further, it must quantify the value of their services.

As most fire chiefs can understand, this is not always an easy thing to do. Simply providing important, even vital, services to area fire departments will not be enough if the economic value of those services cannot be demonstrated.

As with any major project, there is an inherent risk whenever a person or organization attempts to bring about significant change and tries to do things in new ways. The Alliance has been a success story in the past. It must make meaningful changes to be a success in the future.

This Applied Research Project has definite links to the Executive Planning course at the National Fire Academy. In addition to addressing the overall strategic planning process as covered in this project, the course also covered information relating to stakeholder identification – customers being one group of stakeholders – as addressed in research question number one; mission statements as addressed in research question number two; and creating a vision as addressed in research question number three (National Fire Academy, 2002, p. 4-19–4-25).

This project also directly addresses one of the United States Fire Administration's Five-Year Operational Objectives, i.e., "To appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues" (U.S. Fire Administration, 2000). The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the resulting emphasis on Homeland Security have had a profound effect on the American fire service; and the current economic troubles facing many American cities has complicated their response to these new demands. This project illustrates a timely response to these issues by demonstrating how public agencies can still conduct strategic planning processes, even in this difficult and changing environment, to ensure that they address these needed in the most appropriate and cost-effective manner possible.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance has enjoyed a favorable reputation nationally since Glenn Alexander's article discussing the Alliance appeared in *Fire Chief* magazine in 1996. It has also maintained many supporters locally. As Paul Hemmeter (2002) noted in the *Ohio Fire Chiefs' Journal*, while discussing cooperative ventures, "In Dayton it culminated in the regional Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance, an umbrella agency which manages funding for Ohio Task Force One, provides joint purchasing for everything from bunker gear to fire engines, and has fostered dozens of interagency planning and monitoring projects."

There is an incredible amount of literature documenting the importance of strategic planning for public and private organizations (Barry, 1997; Bryson, 1995; Harper, 2001; and James, 1996). What happens if organizations don't do adequate planning? Often, nothing new – and that can be a fatal mistake for many organizations. In the absence of a strategic plan, the reason why we do the things we do is usually because that's the way we've always done it (O'Toole, 1999, p. 214-5). Put another way, "In the absence of clearly defined targets, we are forced to concentrate on activities and efforts...and we ultimately become enslaved by them" (Haines, 1995, p. 40). We tend to keep doing the same things over and over, unless and until we see some specific reason to change. The impetus for change can come from many directions. Survival of the organization can be one reason to change; a desire for excellence can be another. Both provide motivation for the Alliance. In any case, strategic planning provides the direction for such change.

Change is ultimately the reason for going through such planning processes as this. Organizations like the Alliance will disappear if they can't change to meet new challenges. But if the Alliance can adapt and meet new and emerging needs, and if they can stay relevant, it is

usually better and easier to build on a foundation that already exists than to start from scratch. Harper (2001) notes that challenging the status quo will rarely be as smooth a process as people would like. There will always be surprises in any change process, there will be problems and setbacks and, to make significant change, you must challenge prevailing wisdom. Jack Welch believes leaders should “stimulate and relish change...do not be frightened or paralyzed by it. See change as opportunity, not just a threat” (Slater, 2001, p. 31).

Strategic planning processes often include what is called a SWOT (or SWOTT) analysis. It's very important to identify an organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats – and often Trends – early in the planning process (Bryson, 1995; Goodstein et al, 1992; Haines, 1995). Conducting a strategic plan without this basic information would be like driving in a strange land without a map, unable to read the road signs or speak the language.

Looking at the specific research questions addressed in this project, there is a library of resources concerning each general topic – identifying customers and addressing their needs; creating or changing mission statements; and creating a vision for an organization. An overview of the literature associated with each general topic is provided below.

### **Identifying an Organization's Customers**

Many organizations claim to be customer-centered or customer-focused. This is true in the private sector, e.g., Wendy's Restaurants, and in the fire service, e.g., Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini's idealized customer, “Mrs. Smith” (Abrahams, 1995 and Klinoff, 1999). There is some literature available dealing with identifying customers but, in many cases, organizations assume that they know who their customers are. In most cases, they're probably right; the customers – internal and external – are easily identified. Even with public fire departments,

there is enough literature available to have a relatively clear understanding of who the departments' customers are (Klinoff, 1999).

The most significant customer(s) for the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance are not so easily and positively identified. In cases such as the Alliance, organizations must perform customer identification processes, or more commonly, stakeholder analyses to be sure (Bryson, 1995).

Why is it so important to know who your customers are? Because you can't provide your customers with the services they want and need if you don't know who they are. Of course it can be dangerous to concentrate too heavily on one customer or stakeholder, at the risk of alienating or ignoring other important stakeholders, but it is much more dangerous to operate in the dark, not knowing who your customers really are (Bryson, 1995). After you have identified your customer(s), much information is available to help you identify their needs and make sure you are properly addressing those needs (Doolittle, 1994 and Haines, 1995).

### **Developing or Revising a Mission Statement**

There is much literature available concerning mission statements. Unfortunately, there is no readily agreed on definition of just what a mission statement should be or what information it should contain (Abrahams, 1995; Bryson, 1995; Harper, 2001). Harper (2001) identifies mission statements and vision statements as follows:

Mission – A general statement that reflects the company's reason for being.

Vision – A statement that identifies specifically what the company wants to be.

While some people might want to get more specific and detailed in these definitions, most current authors would probably be willing to accept these as working definitions.

Some mission statements are very short – like a brief but memorable slogan. For example, the Phoenix Fire Department’s Mission Statement is:

*Prevent Harm,*

*Survive,*

*And BE NICE!*

Many others are considerably more complex. The most important point is that the mission statement must provide information to the organization’s customers and other stakeholders about what the organization views as its primary lines of business, and it must provide information to those inside the organization that help them understand their roles and responsibilities. If it inspires them as well, that is even better.

Haines (1995) has devised a “Mission Development Triangle” to help organizations in this process. It starts by asking three important questions:

1. Why do we exist?

- Societal need
- Stockholder/stakeholder need

2. Whom do we serve?

- Customers
- Areas

3. What do we produce?

- Products
- Services



Using these basic questions, most organizations should be able to draft at least a preliminary mission statement to serve as a basis for discussion and further development.

Michael Herrlein, the facilitator hired by the Alliance to assist in the current planning process, developed a similar outline to use for developing a mission statement:

*Mission*

*A succinct and compelling statement of our reason for existence*

*A statement of our core work, products and services*

*Who we serve and how they benefit*

*A basis for daily decisions about the work I do and we do*

*We create the statement and are mobilized by it (Herrlein, 2002)*

All of the above definitions and processes assume that the customer has been identified in advance.

### **Developing a Vision for an Organization/Options for the Future**

As previously noted, a vision statement identifies specifically what a company wants to be in the future. For the purposes of this project, it should be thought of as looking three to five years in the future and deciding what services or products the organization would provide if it were as successful as it could be.

Having a vision implies that the organization is focused on the future. We should begin with the end in mind. What will the Alliance look like in three to five years? Harper (2001) recommends that organizations maintain this forward focus and suggests that leading change must become a way of life – not an easy process. He makes many recommendations that would

pull people out of their comfort zones. In fact, this is one of his primary suggestions, to get out of your comfort zone. Other recommendations include:

- Never say never
- Think the unthinkable
- Run worst case scenarios
- Challenge every assumption
- Go from whether or not...to when
- Realize that someday could be tomorrow

Harper (2001) and Courtney (2001) recommend that organizations develop and maintain contingency plans so they can be prepared for a range of possible futures. It's difficult to predict the future with any certainty, so both authors stress that multiple plans (or visions) should be developed to deal with different possible environments. This is especially important in rapidly changing environments.

Barry (1997) recommends several different approaches to setting direction for organizations. Each one may be the most appropriate in different situations. One option is to use a scenario approach. The organization develops several different visions for the future and the planning group chooses which option or options are most appropriate. They then flesh out the plans by deciding how to go from the current reality to the desired future. This is actually one of the approaches used during the second planning session in this current process.

Another option Barry recommends is a critical issues approach. Here a list of critical issues is identified and discussed in some logical order. The strategic plan becomes more firm as each issue reaches some resolution. The first draft of a vision is basically completed by the time the list is exhausted.

James (1996) notes that most organizational change is incremental. Organizations typically change a little bit at a time. She discusses the possibility that drastic changes might often be more appropriate, with little transition time. She notes that organizations still go through the same stages as with more incremental changes, just at an accelerated rate.

Specific for fire service organizations, there has been an emphasis on the need for strategic partnerships for several years (International Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation, 1996). This has become even more important after September 11, 2001. Local public safety organizations, including fire and police departments, must be prepared to respond and work together on large-scale incidents. They must prepare emergency response and emergency operations plans and they must be prepared to work closely with state and federal agencies at large natural and made-made disasters (Dalton, 2002).

### **Literature Review Summary**

There are many strategic planning process models available in the current literature. Most of them have similar components in some specific order (Bryson, 1995 and Goodstein et al, 1992). The following list identifies a generic planning process that covers most of the concerns identified by the various models reviewed in this current process.

- Background Analysis/Planning to Plan
- SWOTT Analysis
  - Strengths
  - Weaknesses
  - Opportunities
  - Threats
  - Trends

- Customer/Stakeholder Analysis/Identification
- Mission Development
- Vision Development
- Strategic Plan (w/ Contingencies Identified)
- Implementation Plan (w/ Contingency Plans)
- Work Plans and Budgets
- Regular Reviews/Monitoring/Updates

The reader may note that there is very little information specific to other regional fire or emergency medical service agencies, or to their operations and strategic planning processes. There are two basic reasons for this. First, there are very few agencies similar to the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance. There are some that do some of the same things the Alliance does, but they typically do them using a very different structure and organization, legally and operationally. That does not mean that the Alliance doesn't try to learn from them or follow their lead. For example, the Alliance has investigated the way Indianapolis set up a regional communications system, and Alliance members went there to learn about how they administer the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) (see <http://www.indygov.org/ifd/> for more information). The Alliance also modeled much of their own CPAT program after the Phoenix/Mesa Arizona program (see [http://comweb1a.ci.mesa.az.us/fire\\_testing/default.asp](http://comweb1a.ci.mesa.az.us/fire_testing/default.asp) for more information). The Alliance also looked at how Montgomery County Maryland operates regional programs, although their countywide fire department evolved far further than the Alliance was intended to or intends to in the future (see <http://www.co.mo.md.us/safety/> for more information).

The second reason is that the focus of this Applied Research Project is on the strategic planning process, not specifically on the resulting strategic plan. In fact, there is no strategic plan directly produced from this process. That will come some weeks or months – not too many – after this project has been completed. The unique aspect of this project is that it uses a traditional, although somewhat customized, planning process to reach a certain point in the overall strategic planning program; then it takes the information learned and points the Alliance in an entirely different direction to complete the plan.

## **PROCEDURES**

As noted in the Introduction section above, the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance needs to update its Strategic Plan but, due to the uncertain, rapidly changing environment it currently faces, a traditional strategic planning process is not appropriate (Courtney, 2001 and Bryson, 1995). This cannot be used as an excuse, however, not to work to establish the best possible plan for the future of the Alliance. An alternative planning process was developed, as detailed below, to address this problem.

To begin the process, the Alliance's Executive Director researched the Alliance's past, evaluated its current condition and, working with as many members as possible, tried to determine a range of options available for the Alliance in the future. Noting that the Alliance needs to make changes in the very near future, he wanted to conduct a condensed planning process to answer the three research questions addressed by this Applied Research Project:

1. Who is the primary target customer for the Alliance?
2. What should the mission of the Alliance be?

3. What are some of the services that the Alliance could reasonably provide in the future?

The Executive Director, working with the Alliance Executive Committee, will take the results from this process, i.e., the answers to these three questions, and use these results as a basis to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. This plan and the resulting implementation plans will have to be very flexible and address many potential contingencies for the future. Trying to maintain the required levels of flexibility would be very cumbersome – probably impossible – in a traditional, fully developed strategic planning process.

As the Executive Director wanted to be an active participant in the planning process, he realized that the Alliance would need a facilitator to assist with the planning sessions. He selected Michael Herrlein, also recently retired from the City of Dayton and very familiar with the area fire and emergency medical service delivery systems.

Since the Executive Director, the process facilitator and all of the people expected to participate in the planning process were very familiar with the Alliance, area fire and emergency medical service delivery systems, area governmental entities, and with strategic planning processes in general, the Executive Director and process facilitator felt they could achieve their goals with only three two-hour planning sessions. There would be no need for an extended educational process for planning participants.

The Executive Director and the process facilitator worked together to plan each of the three sessions. They both have extensive experience in strategic and operational planning, so they felt qualified to develop a process specific to the Alliance's needs. They did, however, use bits and pieces from a number of the references presented in this report, sometimes conducting individual segments of the planning very close to what was presented in those references. For

example, Goodstein et al, 1992, provided a general outline that was modified for this planning process; and the scenario approach used in the second session was very close to the approach discussed by Barry, 1997. Other segments used techniques that were a combination of other peoples' recommendations, combined with procedures developed by the Executive Director and the process facilitator specific for this process.

While they had an overview of what they expected out of the process, they only planned one session at a time, so they could customize the next session according to the results of the last. They used a process called *Compression Planning* in these sessions. *Compression Planning* is a storyboarding process as taught by McNellis Company (see their website at <http://www.mcnellis.com/> and Appendix C of this report for more information). An outline of the three planning sessions and how they were administered is included below.

### **Day One Process**

The *Compression Planning* (storyboarding) process generally includes having several 4'X4' black pinning boards in the front of the room. A number of colored cards are pinned onto these boards, either at the beginning of the planning session or as the planning session progresses (see Appendix C for an outline of some of the cards that were used at the beginning of the first planning session).

Cards introducing the Alliance and explaining the planning process were on the boards at the beginning of each session. These were briefly presented and discussed, and then the process moved on to the real work of the planning sessions. For example, when the group started to discuss the strengths of the Alliance, new cards were printed and pinned to the board as they were proposed by the participants (see the list below). After this process was completed, there was a discussion period to make sure everyone was clear on what the individual cards or ideas

meant. The participants were then given the opportunity to vote for the individual cards or ideas. This was done by sticking a colored dot or dots on the cards of their choice. The number of votes each card received is noted in parentheses.

What are our current strengths?

- *COG (council of governments) structure (7)*
- *Political strength in number of members (1)*
- *Committed membership (1)*
- *Statewide and FEMA relationships (1)*
- *Sinclair partnership*
- *Name recognition*
- *New director*

The first day was devoted to discussing the Alliance's successes, failures, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and trends, i.e., a general SWOTT analysis along with a discussion of the Alliance's past operations. A separate process, as described above, was conducted for each of these topics. The specifics of this session are discussed in the next section of this report and they are included in their entirety in Appendix D.

### **Day Two Process**

It was noted that the first session was attended only by fire personnel, along with Glenn Alexander, the first Executive Director of the Alliance. Michael Ratcliff, the Executive Director of the Greater Dayton Area Mayors and Managers Association, was specifically invited to the second session, along with a general invitation to member city managers as well. Still, Mr. Ratcliff was the only representative for city management and elected officials at this session, but he provided valuable input to the process and a unique point of view.



The second session addressed three possible scenarios or future Options for the Alliance. It should be noted that the results of the first planning session helped to determine how the three Options in this session were developed and presented. Specifically, Option B included a traditional emergency management agency's duties and responsibilities as an integral part of Alliance operations. The Executive Director had not considered this a viable option until the first planning session put it back in the mix as a potential Alliance service. The Options discussed included:

### **Option A\***

#### **Continuing Operations/Limited Changes**

- Continue to provide current services
- Streamlined committee structure
- More thorough follow-up on Alliance initiatives
- More responsive to member communities/departments' needs and desires
- Information source for member communities/departments and the general public
- Extensive website development – public and private areas
- Represent member communities/departments on various committees and agencies, e.g., MMRS, Citizen Corps Council, EMS Council, etc.

### **Option B\***

#### **Alliance/EMA/Hazmat Consolidation**

- Continue to provide historical Alliance services
- Provide traditional emergency management services, e.g., coordination, planning and communications

- Provide administrative support for member departments, e.g., fee recovery, grant administration, etc.
- Expanded operational components including Hazmat, local rescue services, etc.
- Additional capacity to add other services in the future

### **Option C\***

#### **Expanded Regional Services**

- Continue to provide historical Alliance services
- Provide some or all of the services listed in Option B above
- Serve an expanded role in providing or coordinating:
  - Emergency planning
  - Automatic Mutual Aid Response agreements
  - Training
  - Emergency specialty teams
  - Public education
  - Communications
  - Domestic preparedness
  - Code enforcement and arson investigation
  - Recruitment, testing and selection processes
  - Such other services as may be determined in the future

\* Note – All options include continued oversight and sponsorship of Ohio Task Force One. The organizational structure as a council of governments would also continue under all three options, although the make-up of the membership may change according to the option chosen.

Each Option was discussed individually and an associated list of pros and cons was developed. These pros and cons were again voted on to determine the relative importance of each. Finally, a straw vote was taken to choose the first and second most appropriate Option for the Alliance's future.

### **Day Three Process**

As noted above, the second session was still attended almost exclusively by fire personnel. There was a specific attempt to get more city managers and/or township administrators at the third planning session. Telephone calls were made to personally invite a number of city managers who have been active in the Alliance in the past, along with a general area wide invitation and update that was sent to all city managers in the Montgomery and Greene County area. Accordingly, the third session was more representative with almost an even number of fire chiefs and administrative representatives.

The third day actually addressed the specific research questions covered in this project. The customer identification process was run very much like the SWOTT analysis conducted on the first day. Participants listed who they thought might be appropriate customers for the Alliance; then they voted for the customers they felt are most important for the Alliance to address.

The mission statement discussion was more like a traditional planning process. As noted in the Literature Review section above, a mission statement was defined for our purposes as:

*A succinct and compelling statement of our reason for existence*

*A statement of our core work, products and services*

*Who we serve and how they benefit*

*A basis for daily decisions about the work I do and we do*

*We create the statement and are mobilized by it (Herrlein, 2002)*

The current Alliance Mission Statement was presented and discussed.

*The Alliance assists members to enhance their Fire/EMS services through optimal resource utilization, operational efficiencies, information sharing and regional cooperation while striving to minimize costs.*

Then some other organizations' mission statements were presented and discussed.

Finally a "straw man" mission statement was presented for the group to discuss and offer alternatives.

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Finally, the group addressed options for the future for the Alliance. A list of sixteen options was prepared in advance for the group's consideration. The group added one more during the discussion phase of the process, to make a total of seventeen options to be addressed. These options were presented on separate colored cards, which were then placed on a 4'X4' black pinning board that was laid out as a chart according to "Difficulty to Implement" and "Return on Investment". Their location on the chart was determined by a general consensus process. There did appear to be a lot of agreement about where each card should be placed on the chart. See Appendix F for more information on this charting procedure.

## **RESULTS**

The full results of the planning process, including all three planning sessions, are included in Appendices D, E and F of this report. They are presented there as they were

distributed to planning participants themselves and to all Alliance fire chiefs, delegates and alternates. The results are summarized in narrative form in this section, concentrating on the answers to the original research questions. The interested reader is referred to these Appendices if they wish further information.

### **Day One Results:**

The first planning session provided the background information needed for the rest of the planning process. The Sinclair Community College Fire Academy program; the ability to network with other Alliance members; the joint purchasing program; and the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Team, Ohio Task Force One, were prominently identified in a discussion of the Alliance's past successes. Among the most critical Alliance failures was the inability to maintain membership buy-in. Such support was present in the past, but it must be rekindled in the future if the Alliance is to continue successfully. Other noted failures were the inability to run itself independently and the failure to gain the support of local government administrators. Again, these must be addressed in the final strategic plan if the Alliance is to be as successful as members hope and expect it to be.

The Alliance's most prominent strength was identified as its council of governments organization. Other strengths included its political strength in number of members; its committed membership; and its statewide and FEMA relationships. Its weaknesses were its lack of organizational commitment and unity; a lack of credibility with local jurisdictions; and a disconnect between the Alliance and the Dayton Area Mayors and Managers Association.

Current threats and constraints included a potential consolidation of the Alliance with the local emergency management authority and regional hazardous materials response team, and turf concerns with the local emergency management authority and police. Choice opportunities to

pursue included regional radio communications; bringing administrators back into the fold; Weapons of Mass Destruction and Homeland Security issues; and the opportunity to become an administrative agency for state and federal money.

Trends that will impact the Alliance in the future include changing expectations of the fire service; unfunded mandates; a declining regional economy; greater difficulties in passing levies; and expanded funding of Homeland Security.

Again, all of this information must be accounted for in the final strategic plan, but it is not the primary focus of this current project.

### **Day Two Results:**

The second planning session addressed three possible future scenarios for the Alliance. These options are presented here in outline form with a narrative discussion of the results of the session. The interested reader is referred to Appendix E for a more detailed presentation of the individual options.

#### **Option A: Continuing Operations/Limited Changes:**

The pros for this option were minimal – no increase in staff or resources required; easy, no change and no bumps in the road; expanded use of technology; and focused involvement in committee activities. The cons included the threat that the organization may fold, not meeting member needs; lack of participation and no group purchasing benefits for major contributors. This was not a popular option in group discussions. There was wide acceptance that the Alliance must change – broad changes are needed and soon.

#### **Option B: Alliance/EMA/Hazmat Consolidation:**

The pros for this option included additional opportunities for cooperation; better coordination of emergency services; potential for long-term cost savings; and avoiding

duplication of effort. Cons included a lack of political support for the Alliance and initial start-up costs.

This option did not receive strong support as the Mayors and Managers Association recently (concurrently with this planning process) developed a draft position statement addressing the future of the Miami Valley Emergency Management Authority (MVEMA). The MVEMA is currently the only emergency management *authority* in Ohio, covering Montgomery and Greene Counties. All other Ohio emergency management *agencies* cover a single county. The Mayors and Managers Association proposes that the MVEMA be split into two county agencies. This split appears very likely to happen. There does not seem to be any likelihood that the MVEMA will combine with the Alliance, but does appear probable that the local hazmat team, the Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team will fall under the Alliance's umbrella in the near future.

#### **Option C: Expanded Regional Services:**

The pros for this option included the opportunity to acquire and share resources and amongst all agencies in the group and the creation of a larger agency to compete for programs and funds. Cons included a lack of political acceptance of the Alliance as the appropriate leader of such an agency and the perception that the existing organization is losing support, can it be sold as a larger concept.

#### **Day Three Results:**

The third planning session actually addressed the three research questions forming the basis of this Applied Research Project. Each will be addressed below.

**Research Question #1:** *Who is the primary target customer for the Alliance?*

The process started by discussing who is the Alliance's primary target customer. There was general support for two primary customer groups. First, there was a strong sentiment that *Local Government* is one of the primary customers. After some discussion, this customer group was recognized as including city and township administrators and elected officials. There was equal support for *Member Fire Departments* as a primary customer, including one vote for *Regional Fire Departments* (as potential member departments in the future?).

*Local Communities* and *Area Citizens* also received support as primary customers. It was noted that *Local Government* and *Member Fire Departments* exist to support the *Local Communities* and *Area Citizens*, but the Alliance's most direct customers are *Local Governments* and *Member Fire Departments* themselves.

Accordingly, the answer to Research Question # 1 regarding the primary target customers for the Alliance is twofold – *Local Governments* and *Member Fire Departments*.

The customers identified during this process and the weight placed on each is detailed below:

- Local Government .....7
- Member Fire Departments.....7
- Local Communities .....2
- Area Citizens .....1
- Urban Search and Rescue.....1
- Regional Fire Departments.....1
- Area City and Township Administrators.....1



**Research Question #2:** *What should the mission of the Alliance be?*

We started this segment by reviewing the Alliance's current Mission Statement:

*The Alliance assists members to enhance their Fire/EMS services through optimal resource utilization, operational efficiencies, information sharing and regional cooperation while striving to minimize costs.*

We then contrasted this statement with the Phoenix Fire Department's Mission Statement:

*Prevent Harm,  
Survive,  
And BE NICE!*

This was done to try to gain support for a more memorable, easier to remember, and inspiring statement. It was noted that there is a significant document explaining the "Phoenix Way" and what this mission statement actually means in practice. It would be the same for the Alliance. The mission statement would give only an overview of the purpose and expectations for the organization. Much more information would have to be included in other documents and sources.

Next, we presented a "straw man" mission statement as a starting point for discussion.

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There was some discussion about what a mission statement should be. Some members of the group felt that a short slogan-type statement does not convey enough information and that a

more fully descriptive mission statement should be maintained. Others agreed with the slogan-type approach, but were not sure that the “straw man” mission statement was the appropriate statement for the Alliance.

In the time allowed, the group was not able to reach a consensus on what the Alliance’s mission statement should be. There was strong consensus among the city managers/township administrators that “return on investment” should be emphasized in measuring the value of the Alliance to its members. The proposed statement that received the most attention and discussion was:

*Provide cost-effective services to member fire departments.*

While we did not come out of the process with a new mission statement, we did come to understand that the city managers group will concentrate very heavily on cost-savings when doing an evaluation of the Alliance in the future. This is, of course, important information to have. Fire chiefs, while recognizing the importance of cost-savings from the Alliance, also recognized that the Alliance has many operational benefits and strengths. They felt these should also be given recognition in any evaluation process. As Haines (1995, p. 41) pointed out, “Financial measures and viability are necessary, but not sufficient, for success.” The fire chiefs would strongly agree with this statement.

Therefore the answer to Research Question #2 is that the Alliance Mission Statement should stay as it is for the immediate future, but the other information obtained in this planning step should be given serious consideration as the strategic planning process continues after this project has been completed.

**Research Question #3:** *What are some of the services that the Alliance could reasonably provide in the future?*

The final segment of this planning session addressed what duties the Alliance could perform in the future and what responsibilities it could have. The planning group was looking three to five years in the future. When given the following options to choose from, and utilizing a consensus process, the options were ranked according to “Difficulty of Implementation” and “Return on Investment.” The full results of this ordering are included in the chart on page 38 of this report.

**Note:** The numbers and order of the items below does not fully signify ranking or the importance of each item. The numbers are only included to make reference to the attached chart more easily understandable.

#### **Potential Options for the Future**

- (1) Oversee/Coordinate WMD/Homeland Security Processes
- (2) Oversee/Coordinate Entry Level Testing
  - Standardized/Common Written Test
  - Single/Regional Hiring List
- (3) Coordinate/Conduct Regional Strategic Planning and Implementation Processes
  - Regional Communications Strategies
  - Mutual Aid and AMAR's
  - Regional Incident Command Standardization
- (4) Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team
  - New Alliance Standing Committee
  - Colocation, Direction and Support Services

- (5) Regional Training
  - Facilities Development Coordination
  - Program Development and Scheduling
  - Training Library/Resource
  - Maintain/Expand Partnership with Sinclair CC
- (6) Provide/Coordinate Public Information/Education Functions
- (7) Maintain Flexibility to Respond to Changing Environment
  - Research and Development Coordination
  - On-Going Strategic Planning, e.g., Continual Monitoring, Annual Reviews, Regular Updates, etc.
- (8) Colocation of Emergency Service Agencies
  - Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team
  - Miami Valley/Montgomery County Emergency Management Authority
- (9) Oversee/Coordinate Human Resource Functions
  - Information/Resource for Smaller Departments/ Communities with Minimal HR Support
- (10) Oversee/Coordinate Ongoing Health and Wellness Program
  - Common Standards of Performance
  - Rehabilitation Programs
  - Coordinate CISM/EAP Programs
- (11) Oversee/Coordinate Code Enforcement Functions
  - Common Fire Codes/Ordinances
  - Coordinated Enforcement/Information Sharing

- (12) Oversee/Coordinate Local Emergency/Support Resources
  - Miami Valley Local Rescue Response Teams
  - Regional Fire Investigation Unit
- (13) Regional Information Source
  - Where The Public Turns For Fire/EMS Information
  - Where Fire Departments Go For Regional Information
- (14) Oversee/Coordinate Entry Level Testing
  - Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT)
- (15) Assist Member Departments in Accreditation Processes
  - Hazard Identification/Evaluation Processes
  - Regional Standard of Coverage
  - Regional Cooperation/Meeting of Accreditation Requirements
- (16) Emergency Management Authority/Agency
  - New Alliance Standing Committee
  - Colocation, Direction and Support Services
- (17) Represent Member Departments/Communities
  - MMRS Committee
  - EMS Council

# MIAMI VALLEY FIRE/EMS ALLIANCE

## Strategic Planning

### OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

		Difficulty to Implement		
		Easy/ Little Difficulty	Moderately Difficult	Significantly Difficult
Return on Investment	High	(1) WMD/Homeland Security Processes		(2) Entry-Level Testing (Standardized/Common Written Test) (3) Regional Strategic Planning and Implementation Processes
		(4) Dayton Regional Hazmat Response Team	(5) Regional Training	
	Moderate	(6) Public Information/Education	(7) Maintain Flexibility to Respond to Changing Environment (8) Colocation of Emergency Service Agencies (9) Human Resource Function (10) Health and Wellness Program	(11) Code Enforcement Function (12) Local Emergency/Support Resources
		(13) Regional Information Source	(14) Entry Level Physical Ability Testing (CPAT)	(15) Assist in Accreditation Process (16) Emergency Management Agency
	Minimal	(17) Represent Member Departments/Communities		

**Figure 1.** This chart demonstrates the results of the analysis of potential future options for the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance. See the text below for more specific information concerning the individual options listed in the chart.

Obviously, those options with the greatest “Return on Investment” and the least “Difficulty of Implementation” should be considered for future implementation. Two items fell clearly into this category – *Oversee/Coordinate WMD/Homeland Security Processes* and *Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team (Colocation, direction and support)*. One item clearly fell at the opposite end of the spectrum – *Emergency Management Authority/Agency (Colocation, direction and support)*. That item can be ruled out as an appropriate function of the Alliance anytime in the immediate future.

Other options fell into less obvious regions of the chart. For example, *Regional Training* was rated as moderately difficult to implement, but it showed a moderate to high return on investment. Therefore, it is an appropriate option for the Alliance to consider pursuing in the future. Similarly, pursuing a *Public Information/Education* function is expected to be easy to implement and, with a moderate return on investment, it too could be a very appropriate option to pursue in the future.

It should be noted that Research Question #3 was specifically, “What are some of the services that the Alliance *could* reasonably provide in the future?” It was not, “What services *should* the Alliance provide in the future?” The list and chart above clearly answer the research question, but they do not recommend which options should be specifically pursued. With the level of uncertainty in the Alliance’s current environment, the first question is very appropriate for this planning process; the related question about what services the Alliance should provide will have to be answered in an internal planning process for the Alliance, with multiple contingencies identified for various outcomes.

It should also be pointed out that some individual components of these options might be appropriate for the Alliance’s future, while the overall option may not be. For example, Option #3, Coordinate/Conduct Regional Strategic Planning and Implementation Processes, may not be appropriate for full implementation but one of its components, Regional Communications Strategies, probably would be worth pursuing, as noted in the SWOTT process on day two.

## **DISCUSSION**

There is always an inherent risk whenever a person or organization attempts to bring about significant change and do things in new ways (Harper, 2001 and Slater, 2001). To achieve

a significant success, however, you must sometimes risk spectacular failure. That is the case with the Alliance, significant change is going to happen and it is going to happen soon. In this case, however, there is an even greater risk if the Alliance does not change. Status quo is not an option. This was made clear in the second planning session. If the Alliance does not change, the member communities will not continue to support it financially. The Alliance can't keep doing the things they've always done just because that's the way they've always done it – they couldn't survive in today's environment for very long (O'Toole, 1999).

That was one of the assumptions the Executive Director made in beginning this planning process. Now that it has been confirmed by member fire chiefs and city managers, the next step is to decide what changes, if any, should be made. Not make changes, is that really an option? Yes, it is. If the Alliance cannot again become relevant, if it cannot provide significant, useful and cost-effective services, it probably should disappear. If the Alliance does nothing, this would be the logical outcome. But the Alliance does have a wide range of important roles it can fill, and closing up shop now would be a serious mistake.

The above is not to say that the Alliance doesn't serve a useful purpose right now; they provide a number of important services to member departments. But they probably can't fully justify their continued long-term existence without significant changes in the near future. And in almost everything they do, they must quantify the cost savings or value of the services they provide.

For example, the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance is the sponsoring agency of Ohio Task Force One. Some people might consider this a drain on Alliance time and resources, but there are many benefits. The cost-savings and value of its association with the Alliance will become even more obvious in the near future when a local rescue response capability goes on-



line. Area fire departments will be able to rely on the services of a large, extremely well-trained and well-equipped rescue team. Those departments will not have to spend money duplicating the local rescue team's services – buying rescue apparatus, training many of their own personnel in all of the search and rescue specialties, providing an uneconomical level of redundancy. They will also have access to advanced rescue training in the area that wouldn't otherwise be available. Even if they were to try, they couldn't match the level of service they will receive from the local response team, no matter how much money they might be willing to spend trying.

Other examples will be discussed in the Recommendations section of this report. Not only are there significant savings available from current services, some of these services may even be expanded to meet new challenges and opportunities in the future. Much like a private business, the Alliance must meet the challenge of a changing environment by providing the right services at the right time.

The SWOTT analysis recommended by Bryson (1995), Goodstein et al (1992) and Haines (1995) provided the baseline information needed for the rest of the planning process. It helped to identify many of the strengths and opportunities that the Alliance can build on for the future. For example, the Alliance should take advantage of its council of governments structure to take over responsibility for and supervision of the Regional Hazmat Team, and it must bring city managers and township administrators back into the fold regardless of which future options it pursues. It also identified weaknesses and threats that must be considered in any future operations. For example, again regardless of which future options the Alliance pursues, it must work to rebuild organizational commitment and unity among member fire departments and it must rebuild credibility with local jurisdictions.

Looking at the specific research questions from this project, there are obviously lessons to be learned. The Alliance needs to be pointed in the right direction and it must get moving!

As for identifying an organization's primary customers, Chief Brunacini obviously knows that he has internal customers along with *Mrs. Smith*, his idealized external customer (Klinoff, 1999). He also knows he must satisfy other stakeholders as well, e.g., Phoenix's city manager is obviously an important stakeholder. Likewise, the Alliance has more than one target customer – *Local Governments* and *Member Fire Departments*. As Bryson (1995) notes, an organization must give attention to all stakeholders' concerns. If the Alliance were to concentrate solely on one customer at the expense of the other, it would not be in business long. Both groups are very important for the Alliance's success, and even its continued existence.

It's likely other customers would have received more attention in this segment of the planning process if different participants had been present. For example, if citizen groups had been involved, there would probably have been more attention placed on the actual services the public receives from member fire departments. While the identified customers' concerns must obviously be attended to, other customers cannot be ignored (Haines, 1995).

As for the Alliance's Mission Statement, just because it was not changed in this process does not mean that the lessons learned here shouldn't figure prominently in future planning activities. Haines' (1995) "Mission Development Triangle" provides a useful framework to address the results of this planning segment.

For example, why do we exist? What societal need do we fill and what are our stakeholder's needs? Whom do we serve? Who are our customers? The fire chiefs would probably look closely at operational gains made possible by Alliance affiliation; but the Alliance would not last long without also addressing the city manager's needs to be economically

responsible to their home communities. That is one of their responsibilities; their stakeholders expect them to be fiscally responsible. City managers would not remain in their positions if they did not maintain a balanced budget; their elected officials and citizens would not permit irresponsible spending. Should the fire chief's concerns be ignored? Obviously not! Both groups' concerns must be addressed.

It would probably be useful to develop a "working copy" of a new mission statement just for this strategic planning process. It would not have to be formally adopted by the organization, just something for the Executive Director to hang over his desk for quick reference and guidance. Something like:

*The Alliance assists members to enhance their Fire/EMS services through:*

*optimal resource utilization,*

*operational efficiencies,*

*information sharing and*

*regional cooperation while striving to minimize costs.*

*They will accomplish these goals by providing cost-effective services to member fire departments.*

*This will be done to ensure safer communities through working together.*

While it doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, it provides useful information to the Alliance while they complete the current strategic planning process. It keeps the original purpose of the Alliance from being forgotten (Alexander, 1996); it keeps the Alliance's current successes in the forefront so they are carried forward to the extent possible (Hemmeter, 2002); and it provides

direction for where the Alliance needs to go. Not bad for a short-term, crude, cumbersome, interim mission statement.

The service options for the future of the Alliance are going to need more research before any final decisions are made. They have to be refined and developed. As Jack Welch notes, change should be viewed as an opportunity, not a threat (Slater, 2001). The Alliance has many opportunities available to choose from; they need to make sure they choose the right ones. The final recommendations from this planning process, i.e., the final strategic plan and the resulting implementation plans, will almost certainly lead to systemic changes for the Alliance.

Incremental changes would be too little, too late. James (1996) would note that systemic changes are more common than most people would realize. September 11, 2001 has already led to many major systemic changes in the United States and around the world. Computers have revolutionized the way people live and work. Systemic change is very common in this world, but it is often very uncomfortable at the same time.

It is too early to speculate what the final product will look like in the final analysis, but some specific changes are almost certain to happen. Hazmat will almost certainly come under Alliance control; the local EMA almost certainly will not. Other changes will be decided as the process moves internal to the Alliance in the next few weeks and months. As Barry (1997) observed, change can be used to rekindle an organization. One that has fallen behind or become stagnant may often be reenergized by such a change process as the Alliance now faces.

Taken together, this process and the resulting changes will make it much easier to answer a question Mike Ratcliff asked several times during this planning process –“What would be missing if the Alliance didn’t exist?” A very important question all organizations should ask on a regular basis.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This project began by asking three seemingly simple research questions:

1. *Who is the primary target customer for the Alliance?*
2. *What should the mission of the Alliance be?*
3. *What are some of the services that the Alliance could reasonably provide in the future?*

None of the answers came out as simple and straightforward as the Alliance might have wished, but there were no real surprises. The Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance's Executive Director and Executive Committee must now take these results and use them as a base on which to build a long-term strategic plan, along with shorter-term implementation and action plans. Due to the volatility of the economic and political environment they operate in, they must build a structure that has the flexibility to respond to a wide range of contingencies, especially for the next few years. The Miami Valley, and the United States as a whole, faces more uncertainty now than they have in many years.

Specific to the research questions above, the Alliance must make sure that these plans meet the needs of the two specific target customer groups – *Local Government* and *Member Fire Departments* (Question #1). The Alliance must also never lose sight of their ultimate customer groups – *Local Communities* and *Area Citizens*.

They must ensure that their plans address the mission of the Alliance as well. For this specific planning process, they should use the interim mission statement discussed above:

*The Alliance assists members to enhance their Fire/EMS services through:*

*optimal resource utilization,*

*operational efficiencies,*

*information sharing and*

*regional cooperation while striving to minimize costs.*

*They will accomplish these goals by providing cost-effective services to member fire departments.*

*This will be done to ensure safer communities through working together.*

While it's rough and not very memorable – except for its clumsiness – it provides important information about the expectations the Alliance must meet in the immediate future (Question #2).

This project also identified a range of potential options the Alliance could pursue over the next few years. Some of these were clearly appropriate for the Alliance; some were noticeably inappropriate. For example, the Alliance should assume oversight and responsibility for the Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team. They should not pursue oversight of local emergency management functions.

Many of the other options have a potential for moderate to high return on investment, but the cost or difficulty of implementation needs to be weighed carefully as the Alliance chooses which projects to pursue over the next few years (Question #3).

Two other issues should be considered in this same context. First, many of the Alliance's current services should be maintained if at all possible. At the least, they should be considered

alongside the other options chosen in this process. For example, the joint purchasing program that was discussed prominently in this report is still a valuable membership benefit. While the State of Ohio cooperative purchasing program does provide a similar benefit and has reduced the scope of the Alliance bidding processes, it is in its early stages for fire and emergency medical service supplies and equipment. The Alliance still has numerous bidding processes in place which will continue to save members significant amounts of money, probably for years to come. These benefits have extended beyond just the member fire departments as well. For example, the Alliance has bids in place for medical testing. Some communities use these same medical testing bids for their police as well. The same testing would also be available for CDL testing if communities so desire. The Alliance should also explore less traditional joint purchasing opportunities. For example, can they join together to buy health insurance for all member communities' employees? Other current cost-saving and operations-enhancing programs should be considered in the planning process as well. Some of these programs may be maintained or even expanded in the future.

The other relevant issue is that individual components of the options considered during the final planning session may be considered for implementation, even if the total option did not score exceptionally well. For example, regional communications was a component of the *Regional Strategic Planning and Implementation Processes* option. Even if this option is not chosen for implementation, the communications component may be included in the final strategic plan since it scored high as a future opportunity for the Alliance during the first planning session. It is also one of the *Breakthrough Goals* in the current Alliance Strategic Plan.

The Alliance should review the existing Strategic Plan to see which other options listed there might still be relevant and appropriate for future consideration. For example, another

*Breakthrough Goal* in that plan is to “Develop a framework for facilitating Automatic Mutual Aid Response System Agreements” – still a very relevant and important process to pursue.

Obviously there are many other factors the Alliance must consider as they put their strategic plan together, e.g., less vulnerable funding sources, federal and state grants, etc. The highest priority is to start making changes immediately. The Alliance should bring the Hazmat Team on board as soon as possible, while they are still fleshing out the other parts of their plan. And they must make strategic planning an ongoing function of the Alliance.

This Applied Research Project should serve as an example to other organizations. Keep strategic planning on the front burner and don’t let uncertainty stop the organization from moving forward. They may have to step out-of-the-box, as the Alliance has in this process, but they can’t let the fear of change paralyze them. The results of inaction and stagnation are much more frightening and certain than the fear of the unknown.

The Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance does have a bright future. It just isn’t the future people would have expected a few years ago. It is a changing world.



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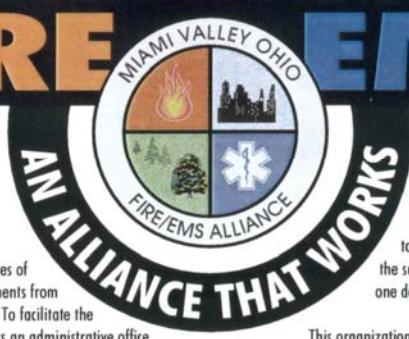
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## Appendix A: Alliance Fact Sheet



### WHAT IS IT?

The Miami Valley FIRE/EMS Alliance (Alliance) is a Council of Governments formed from a consortium of Fire Departments that provide fire and emergency medical services to political jurisdictions in Clark, Greene, Montgomery and Warren Counties of Ohio. In addition, there are 5 Associate Member Fire Departments from counties outside of the Miami Valley, and 1 Affiliate Member. To facilitate the business activities created by its members, the Alliance supports an administrative office. The Alliance focus is on maximizing resource utilization, minimizing costs and insuring a high level of service without the loss of local autonomy. Its efforts are directed toward gaining the effectiveness and efficiency of one large organization through mutual cooperation of several independent departments.

### WHAT DOES IT DO?

By creating separate standing committees that represent the basic functions of the typical fire department, the Alliance is able to provide for the service needs of its members. It is organized in the same manner as a Fire District. There is a board of Directors with one delegate from each member department, an Executive Committee, and an Executive Director.

This organizational setup permits the members of the Alliance to create operating policies, provide programs and make joint purchases that provide real benefits to the members and their citizens. The committees, staffed by individuals from member departments, determine the needs within their area of responsibility and recommend a solution to the Board of Directors.

### HOW OFTEN DOES THE BOARD MEET?

The Alliance Board of Directors meets at least every three months. Additional meetings can be scheduled as necessary.

### HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BELONG?

The three membership categories are Board Member, Associate Member and Affiliate Member. The fees for each category vary.

### FULL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Full Board Membership is limited to those jurisdictions that are responsible for operating a FIRE/EMS Department in Butler, Clarke, Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery, Preble and Warren Counties in Ohio. If a FIRE/EMS Department serves more than one jurisdiction, the local government that manages the fire department writes the membership check. The fee is based on the 1990 U.S. Census and is calculated by multiplying \$.24 per citizen protected by the fire department.

#### FULL BOARD MEMBERS

- Beavercreek Township Fire Department
- Bellbrook Fire Department
- Brookville Fire Department
- Butler Township Fire Department
- Clearcreek Fire District
- Dayton Fire Department
- Englewood Fire Department
- Fairborn Fire Department
- Germantown Fire Department
- Harrison Township Fire Department
- Huber Heights Fire Division
- Farmersville Fire Association
- Jefferson Township Fire Department
- Kettering Fire Department
- Miami Township Fire Department
- Miamisburg Fire Department
- New Carlisle Fire Department
- New Lebanon Fire Department
- Oakwood Public Safety Department
- Phillipsburg Fire & Rescue
- Riverside Fire Department
- Trotwood Fire & Rescue
- Washington Township Fire Department
- West Carrollton Fire Department

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Associate Membership is reserved for governments that operate fire departments beyond the region defined by Butler, Clarke, Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery, Preble and Warren Counties. Since they are beyond the immediate region, they may not benefit from the full range of Alliance services. Jurisdictions that would like to participate in a limited range of Alliance activities can do so as Associate Members. Associate Members pay a **\$500.00 annual fee plus 1% on any purchase of a single item or lot bid that exceeds \$20,000.00**. First time enrollment has a 2-year membership requirement. A membership request must have approval by Executive Committee Members. Associate Members may serve on Standing Committees, but do not have a vote at Board Meetings.

#### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Liberty Twp., Trumbull County
- Madison Twp., Franklin County
- Violet Twp., Fairfield County
- City of Sidney, Shelby County

### AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP

Affiliate Membership is provided to those entities that have an interest in the activities of the Alliance, but do not qualify for Board Membership. Their participation in Alliance activities would provide mutual benefit. Examples of such organizations would be the Red Cross, academic institutions and Emergency Management Agencies. Fees for Alliance participation are established by the Executive Committee of the Board and subject to a 2/3 favorable vote by Board members. Affiliate Members do not vote at Board meetings but can belong to Standing Committees.

#### AFFILIATE MEMBERS

- Sinclair Community College

The Alliance welcomes participation from FIRE/EMS departments throughout the State of Ohio. Please contact our administrative offices at (937) 512-5103 with any further questions about membership opportunities.

visit our website

http://my.ohio-voyager.net/~mvfa/

**Appendix B: Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance Strategic Plan January 2000-December 2003****Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance  
Strategic Plan  
January, 2000 – December 2003****How this Document Was Created**

This Strategic Plan was created with input from many people who have an interest in the future of the Alliance and Fire and Emergency Medical Services in the Miami Valley; they are the Alliance's stakeholders. Eight facilitated meetings were held between June and September 1999 to provide input to this process. The groups involved in these meetings included the Executive Committee of the MVF/EMS Alliance, delegates and alternates to the Alliance, elected and appointed officials from member communities and representatives from the Alliance's standing committees. The Executive Director of the Alliance attended each of these meetings in order to hear from these various constituencies first hand. The document that follows represents the best thinking of those groups and the staff of the Alliance.

**Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance  
Strategic Plan  
January, 2000 – December 2003**

**I. Nature of the Business**

**A. Description of the business:** The Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance is a council of governments made up of representatives of member FIRE/EMS departments and officials from the communities that they represent. Currently, there are 24 full members, 5 associate members and 1 affiliate member (Sinclair Community College). The Alliance represents departments from throughout the Miami Valley in Montgomery, Greene, Clark, Warren, Shelby, Franklin, Licking and Trumbull Counties. The Alliance was formed to provide a regional forum to discuss and address Fire/EMS related issues and to provide member communities the opportunity to benefit from the combined purchasing power of the Alliance. The Alliance is funded through a membership fee based on the population of the member communities. The Alliance employs a full-time executive director and one full-time support staff person

**B. Industry characteristics:** The Fire/EMS sector is characterized by community-based, public fire and emergency service departments. These departments vary in structure and make up; including departments made up entirely by career Fire/EMS, combination career and volunteer departments and all-volunteer departments. Increasingly, private ambulance services are also providing Emergency Medical Services. Departments are locally controlled with strong individual identities. There are several current trends impacting FIRE/EMS delivery. These include: the impact of Managed Care on delivery of EMS services, the relative increase in the number of EMS runs compared to fire suppression runs, increasing federal and state health and safety regulations and a strong economy that is making recruiting qualified personnel more difficult.

**C. Competition:** Since departments are geographically based, with each department responsible for a particular community, direct competition does not exist between public departments. Instead, there is a tradition of mutual support in responding to serious fire and emergency situations. However, there is a trend nationally of private, for-profit ambulance services competing for portions of the EMS business. Managed Care cost containment measures will likely encourage an increase in private providers. More generally, Fire/EMS departments are in competition for limited public resources with all other areas of local government.

**D. Location description:** The MVF/EMS Alliance offices are housed in Building 20 on the campus of Sinclair Community College, in the same building where Fire Science Technology courses are taught.

**E. Distinctive characteristics and competencies:** The Alliance provides a unique forum to address Fire/EMS related issues on a regional basis while allowing each member department to remain independent. Members have the opportunity to learn from each other and to support each other's efforts to improve the quality of service provided to the communities of the Miami Valley. It also allows members to combine their purchasing power in order to help departments and communities use financial resources efficiently by obtaining the best possible prices on equipment and supplies.

## **II. Organizational Vision and Mission:**

### **A. Vision of the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance**

High-quality, cost-effective Fire and EMS services throughout the Miami Valley.

### **B. Mission Statement of the Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance**

The Alliance assists members to enhance their Fire/EMS services through optimal resource utilization, operational efficiencies, information sharing and regional cooperation while striving to minimize costs.

**C. Philosophy of the Business:** The Alliance is committed to the safety and well being of the citizens of the Miami Valley. The primary responsibility of member departments is to provide an outstanding level of protection and services to citizens while using public money as wisely as possible. The Alliance supports these efforts by promoting regional cooperation and efficient use of public funds. The Alliance recognizes and respects the local identity and control of member departments while striving toward a vision of high-quality, cost-effective Fire and EMS services throughout the Miami Valley.

## **III. Strategic Posture and Goals:**

**A. Strategic Posture:** The Alliance would like to grow to include all the communities in the Miami Valley. As a voluntary organization, we will achieve that growth by making our services attractive enough that we retain all current members and add new communities each year for the duration of this strategic plan. Concurrently, the organization will strive to raise the awareness among the general public and their elected and appointed officials concerning the Alliance's mission, goals and activities. We will act as the regional forum on issues that impact the quality of fire and emergency services that is provided to the citizens of the Miami Valley.

**B. Breakthrough Goals:** Over the next thirty-six months, The MV/FEMS Alliance will focus on the following five breakthrough Goals:

**Goal 1: Increase the number of communities actively participating in the joint purchasing process by 50% by 1/1/2002.**

1. The Alliance will collect and coordinate member departments' long-range Capital Improvement Plans and other purchase plans annually in order to align the bid process with the needs of member departments.
2. The Alliance will work to build consensus among member departments on standard specifications for most commonly purchased items
3. A process will be developed to secure purchase commitments from member communities in writing before bids are submitted. This process will include a mechanism that encourages members to honor those commitments
4. In order to maximize savings, the Alliance will encourage members to purchase similar equipment and supplies. When appropriate, that Alliance will provide members with information concerning the purchase preferences of other member departments.
5. The Alliance will prepare and publish a schedule of planned bid purchases a year in advance on a schedule that corresponds with the majority of members' fiscal year. Non-scheduled bid purchases will be announced as far in advance as possible.

**Goal 2: Develop a formal Alliance position on a regional Fire/EMS communication strategy that has the support of 75% of member communities by 1/1/2002.**

1. Involve key community leaders including business people, citizens, elected officials and appointed officials in a process to plan a regional Fire/EMS communication strategy.
2. Complete a benchmark study of what other communities/regions have done to coordinate communications. This study should include both the benefits of such a strategy and the potential consequences of being unable to communicate effectively in a multi-jurisdictional catastrophe or crisis.
3. Develop a position paper that defines all the benefits of a coordinated regional communication strategy and circulate that paper to gain support.
4. Identify funding options/sources to support implementation of a coordinated regional communications strategy.



**Goal 3: Develop a framework for facilitating Automatic Mutual Aid Response System agreements among member communities by 1/1/2003.**

1. Publicize the benefits of successful AMARS agreements by using the positive experiences/anecdotes of member departments.
2. Provide a standard agreement format that can act as a template for communities entering into AMARS agreements.
3. Complete a risk analysis of areas not currently covered by AMARS agreements to determine what areas within the Alliance might benefit the most from such an agreement.
4. Create operations and training guidelines for areas considering AMARS.

**Goal 4: Increase the awareness of and support for Alliance activities over the next three years so that 75% of elected and appointed officials in member communities and other key officials are familiar with who we are and support what we are doing.**

1. Document and demonstrate a return on investment that member communities have experienced by being a part of the Alliance.
2. Circulate this Strategic Plan to all elected and appointed officials of member communities and other key elected and appointed officials. In addition, make the plan available upon request to potential member communities and the media.
3. Promote the Alliance on a national scale by publishing articles in both relevant trade journals and those journals aimed at local elected and appointed officials.
4. Send the Alliance newsletter to all elected and appointed officials in member communities and provide articles for use in community newsletters.
5. Develop and deliver an informational presentation about the Alliance and its activities for use with councils, commissions and other public forums.

**Goal 5: Develop a comprehensive master plan for a regional training facility for fire, Haz-Mat and rescue services, by 6/1/2001.**

1. Identify a comprehensive list of training needs that could be addressed through a regional facility.
2. Identify the type and amount of resources that will be needed to create and sustain a viable regional training facility and an inventory of those resources that already exist within the region.
3. Develop a financial plan for a regional training facility and identify potential funding sources.
4. Define an appropriate administrative/management structure for a regional training facility.

**C. Critical Success Measures:** Simultaneous with the pursuit of the Breakthrough Goals above, The Alliance will monitor and seek improvement in all areas of the operation with special attention to:

1. Increasing public awareness of the Alliance as an authority in Fire/EMS issues as measured by contacts from the media and local officials requesting information and positions.
2. Tracking the percentage of board members who attend meetings on a regular basis. Target: 75% +.
3. Retaining 90 % of board members from one year to the next
4. Operating within budget.
5. Scheduling and convening executive meetings with quorum on a monthly basis.
6. Retaining current members and adding new members each year.
7. Generating monthly press coverage/information release about Alliance activities or public service announcements sponsored by the Alliance.

## Appendix C: Compression Planning Overview

### **Compression Planning**

#### **What is it?**

- A process which brings focus and clarity to a meeting
- Originated with the Disney storyboard process
- Uses pure form thinking to accelerate the process

#### **Roles and responsibilities:**

##### **Facilitator**

- Guides the group's process
- Encourages input
- Helps the group "spin ideas"

##### **Pinner**

- Pins cards to the board
- Keeps the board neat
- Takes cues from the facilitator

##### **Printer**

- Captures ideas on cards
- Takes cues from the facilitator
- Makes sure each card is a complete thought
- Duzn't wurry abowt speling

#### **Explore guidelines:**

- Suspend judgment
- Listen to each other
- Spin thoughts into rich ideas
- No speeches: follow the 15-20 second rule
- Assume positive intent

#### **Focus guidelines:**

- Challenge ideas, not people
- Narrow down to a manageable few
- Merge ideas to create strength
- Focus in on unique factors

Background	Purpose of This Session	WHAT ARE OUR CURRENT STRENGTHS?	WHAT ARE OUR CURRENT WEAKNESSES?	CURRENT THREATS OR CONSTRAINTS ON MVFEA
Overall Project Purpose	TO CREATE AN MVFEA OPERATING PLAN WHICH ADDRESSES THE REALITIES OF 2002 AND BEYOND			
MVFEA WAS ESTABLISHED IN 19XX	TO CLARIFY THE CURRENT STATE AND DESIRED DIRECTION OF MVFEA			
MVFEA IS A COUNCIL OF 24 GOVERNMENTS				
MVFEA CREATED A STRATEGIC PLAN IN 1999				
MVFEA IS FUNDED BY MEMBER FEES	Non-Purpose			
	TO IGNORE OR REINVENT THE MVFEA STRATEGIC PLAN			

## **Appendix D: Day One Summary**

This information below was distributed to all Alliance fire chiefs, delegates, alternates and participants in the Strategic Planning Process. The Day Two and Day Three Summaries are included as Appendixes D and E of this report, as well.

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# MIAMI VALLEY FIRE/EMS ALLIANCE

## Strategic Planning Process

### September 9, 2002 Meeting

We had our first meeting of the 2002 Strategic Planning process this morning at Sinclair Community College. The outline on the following pages details the process and results of that meeting.

- **Overall Project Purpose:**
  - *To create a Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance operating plan which addresses the realities of 2002 and beyond.*
- **Background:**
  - *The Alliance was established in 1995*
  - *The Alliance is a Council of 24 governments*
  - *The Alliance is funded by member fees*
  - *The Alliance created a Strategic Plan in 1999*
  - *Original Alliance mission: regional cooperation and buying power*
  - *Much has changed in the fire/EMS environment since 1999*
  - *New Alliance Executive Director hired in Spring 2002*

- *Alliance now ready to attend to key priorities*
- **Purpose of this session:**
  - *To clarify the current state of the Alliance*
  - *To clarify the desired direction of the Alliance*
- **Non-Purpose of this session:**
  - *To ignore or reinvent the existing Alliance Strategic Plan*
- **Major Alliance successes have been\*:**
  - *Sinclair Fire Academy program (5)*
  - *Networking between members (3)*
  - *Joint purchasing (1)*
  - *Urban Search and Rescue Team (1)*
  - *Regional training plan*
  - *Membership*
  - *New staff/stabilization*
  - *CPAT*
  - *More awareness of local, state and national fire service issues*
  - *Montgomery County/Alliance communications agreement*
- **Major Alliance failures have been:**
  - *Membership buy-in (5)*
  - *Ability to run itself independently (3)*
  - *Gaining the support of local government administrators (1)*
  - *Enforcement of joint purchasing agreements*

- *CareNow*
- *Creating documents/programs without proper follow-up/implementation*
- *Selling the Alliance, its programs and services*
- *The former director*
- What are our current strengths?
  - *COG structure (7)*
  - *Political strength in number of members (1)*
  - *Committed membership (1)*
  - *Statewide and FEMA relationships (1)*
  - *Sinclair partnership*
  - *Name recognition*
  - *New director*
- What are our current organizational weaknesses?
  - *Lack of organizational commitment and unity (6)*
  - *Lack of credibility with local jurisdictions (3)*
  - *Disconnect between Alliance and the Dayton Area Mayors and Managers Association (2)*
  - *Poor attendance/production among some committees*
  - *Inadequate member involvement with CPAT*
  - *Avoidance of open discussion of sensitive issues*
  - *Decisions are sometimes made/forced by non-Alliance members*
  - *Rapid turnover among chiefs and city managers/administrators*

- **Current threats or constraints:**
  - *Consolidation of Alliance, EMA and hazmat services (9)*
  - *Turf concerns with EMA and police (1)*
  - *Member apathy*
  - *Eroding member base*
  - *Time for director*
  - *Good economy*
  - *Credibility risk*
  - *New state bidding process*
- **Choice opportunities to pursue:**
  - *Regional radio communications (6)*
  - *Bring administrators back into the fold (6)*
  - *W.M.D./Homeland security (5)*
  - *Funneling agency for state and federal money (1)*
  - *Rarely used regional services*
  - *Alliance as a regional manpower pool/human resource services*
  - *Bad economy*
  - *Emergency information clearinghouse*
  - *Changing the Alliance charter*
  - *Resource library*
  - *Physical location of the Alliance*



- Trends that will impact the Alliance:
  - *Changing expectations of the fire service (5)*
  - *Unfunded mandates (4)*
  - *Declining regional economy (1)*
  - *Greater difficulties in passing levies (1)*
  - *Expanded funding of homeland security (1)*
  - *Expanding national standards for the fire service*
  - *More difficult to get volunteers*
  - *Greater difficulty in filling career positions*
  - *Relationships between volunteer and career firefighters*
  - *Brownfield legislation*

\* – The numbers in parentheses indicates the relative weight placed on the various items in each list. Larger numbers indicate more importance was assigned during a weighting process.

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## Attendance

Michael Herrlein .....	Facilitator
Michael Caudill.....	Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance
Jackie Leland .....	Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance
Ron Casey .....	Harrison Township Fire Department
Dan Alig.....	Riverside Fire Department
Charlie Wiltrout .....	Butler Township Fire Department
David Fulmer .....	Miami Township Fire Department
Roy Mann.....	Jefferson Township Fire Department
Scott Hall .....	Bellbrook Fire Department
Byron Boggs .....	Jefferson Township Fire Department
Larry Collins .....	Dayton Fire Department
Glenn Alexander .....	At-Large

## **Appendix E: Day Two Summary**

To: Alliance Fire Chiefs  
 From: Michael Caudill  
 Subject: September 16<sup>th</sup> Planning Session  
 Date: September 16, 2002

We had the second of three strategic planning sessions this morning at Sinclair Building 20. Three basic options for the future were discussed. Those options are outlined on the following pages as they were presented at that session. After each Option, a list of Pros and Cons is presented as they were developed at that meeting. Once again, the numbers in parentheses indicates the relative weight placed on the various items in each list. Larger numbers indicate more importance was assigned during a weighting process.

It should be noted that a straw vote was taken at the end of the session asking participants which of the three options is the most appropriate for the future of the Alliance. The results were unanimous – Option C (Expanded Operations) received all first place votes, Option B (Alliance/EMA/Hazmat Consolidation) received all second place votes and Option A (Continued Operations/Limited Changes) received no votes at all.

Further information will be forthcoming before the next planning session on Wednesday, October 2, 2002 in Sinclair Room 20-121 at 9:00 a.m.

Below is a list of participants in this planning session:

Michael Herrlein .....	Facilitator
Michael Caudill.....	Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance
Jackie Leland .....	Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance
Bill Ford.....	Huber Heights Fire Department
Larry Shields.....	Phillipsburg Fire Department
Bob Bobbitt.....	Miamisburg Fire Department
Paul Hutsonpillar .....	Trotwood Fire Department
Charlie Wiltrout .....	Butler Township Fire Department
Roy Mann.....	Jefferson Township Fire Department
Larry Collins .....	Dayton Fire Department
Mike Ratcliff.....	Greater Dayton Area Mayors and Managers Assn.
Glenn Alexander .....	At-Large (Retired)

## **Option A\***

### **Continuing Operations/Limited Changes**

- Continue to provide current services
- Streamlined committee structure
- More thorough follow-up on Alliance initiatives
- More responsive to member communities/departments' needs and desires
- Information source for member communities/departments and the general public
- Extensive website development – public and private areas
- Represent member communities/departments on various committees and agencies, e.g., MMRS, Citizen Corps Council, EMS Council, etc.

\* Note – All options include continued oversight and sponsorship of Ohio Task Force One. The organizational structure as a council of governments would also continue under all three options, although the make-up of the membership may change according to the option chosen.

#### **Pros**

- No increase in staff or resources required (6)
- Easy - no change and no bumps in the road (1)
- Expanded use of technology (1)
- Focused involvement in committee activities (1)

#### **Cons**

- Organization may fold! Not meeting member needs (6)
- Lack of participation (2)
- No group purchase benefits for major contributors (1)
- Lack of member commitment/support
- Small accomplishments
- Cost of doing business going up vs. benefit to members
- Continued erosion of administrative support

## **Option B\***

### **Alliance/EMA/Hazmat Consolidation**

- Continue to provide historical Alliance services
- Provide traditional emergency management services, e.g., coordination, planning and communications
- Provide administrative support for member departments, e.g., fee recovery, grant administration, etc.
- Expanded operational components including Hazmat, local rescue services, etc.
- Additional capacity to add other services in the future

\* Note – All options include continued oversight and sponsorship of Ohio Task Force One. The organizational structure as a council of governments would also continue under all three options, although the make-up of the membership may change according to the option chosen.

### **Pros**

- Additional opportunities for cooperation (3)
- Better coordination of emergency services (3)
- Potential for long-term cost savings (2)
- Avoid duplication of efforts (1)
- Better opportunities for grant applications
- Greater flexibility to respond to Homeland Defense initiatives
- Council of Governments works for all entities
- Fire concerns will be addressed by EMA
- Montgomery/Greene counties split of EMA offers opportunity

### **Cons**

- Lack of political support for Alliance (6)
- Initial start-up costs (3)
- Fear loss of local fire department autonomy
- First assumption should not be automatic (traditional services)
- Lack of political support
- Too much emphasis on fire
- Economy has changed
- Political minds can change (reference: March 2002 memo)

## **Option C\***

### **Expanded Regional Services**

- Continue to provide historical Alliance services
- Provide some or all of the services listed in Option B above
- Serve an expanded role in providing or coordinating:
  - Emergency planning
  - Automatic Mutual Aid Response agreements
  - Training
  - Emergency specialty teams
  - Public education
  - Communications
  - Domestic preparedness
  - Code enforcement and arson investigation
  - Recruitment, testing and selection processes
  - Such other services as may be determined in the future

\* Note – All options include continued oversight and sponsorship of Ohio Task Force One. The organizational structure as a council of governments would also continue under all three options, although the make-up of the membership may change according to the option chosen.

### **Pros**

- Expansion provides the opportunity to acquire and share resources amongst all agencies in the group (6)
- Larger agency to compete for programs and funds (3)
- Can become the agency that gives local governments a better feeling about regional cooperation
- Focus service programs on regional participation
- Develop a rarely used service on cost effective basis
- Provides the perception of one very large provider requesting and/or giving services when competing for state and/or federal money
- Enhances regional fire/EMS image

### **Cons**

- Political acceptance of Alliance as appropriate leader (6)
- Existing organization is losing support; can we sell a larger concept? (3)
- Requires local governments to focus attention on rarely used or unimagined needs
- How do politicians get a sense of empowerment?
- Participants must be prepared to attend more meetings
- Getting to "end game" takes much longer
- Concept provides a less than perfect solution

- Local communities must relinquish some autonomy
- Requires a creative group to develop and sell the concept
- Participants must assign and trust delegates to *COG*

## **Appendix F: Day Three Summary**

To: Alliance Fire Chiefs  
 From: Michael Caudill  
 Subject: October 2<sup>nd</sup> Planning Session  
 Date: October 4, 2002

We had the third and last of our three strategic planning sessions Wednesday morning at Sinclair Community College. During this meeting we addressed three separate topics.

### **Primary Target Customer**

We started by discussing who is the Alliance's primary target customer. There was general support for two primary customer groups. First, there was a strong sentiment that *Local Government* is one of the primary customers. After some discussion, this customer group was recognized as including city and township administrators and elected officials. There was equal support for *Member Fire Departments* as a primary customer, including one vote for *Regional Fire Departments* (as potential member departments in the future?).

*Local Communities* and *Area Citizens* also received support as primary customers. It was noted that *Local Government* and *Member Fire Departments* exist to support the *Local Communities* and *Area Citizens*, but the Alliance's most direct customers are *Local Governments* and *Member Fire Departments* themselves.

The customers identified during this process and the weight placed on each is detailed below \*:

• Local Government .....	7
• Member Fire Departments .....	7
• Local Communities .....	2
• Area Citizens .....	1
• Urban Search and Rescue .....	1
• Regional Fire Departments .....	1
• Area City and Township Administrators .....	1
• Member Fire Chiefs .....	0
• Elected Officials .....	0
• Other Public Safety Agencies .....	0
• Private Public Safety Agencies .....	0
• Fire Department Employees .....	0
• Fire Unions .....	0
• Universities/Sinclair Community College .....	0
• Funding Agencies .....	0
• Vendors .....	0

\* – The numbers indicate the relative weight placed on the various items in the list. Larger numbers indicate more importance was assigned during a weighting process.



## **Alliance Mission Statement**

We started this segment by reviewing the Alliance's current Mission Statement:

The Alliance assists members to enhance their Fire/EMS services through optimal resource utilization, operational efficiencies, information sharing and regional cooperation while striving to minimize costs.

We then contrasted this statement with the Phoenix Fire Department's Mission Statement:

Prevent Harm,  
Survive,  
And BE NICE!

This was done to try to gain support for a more memorable, easier to remember, and inspiring statement. It was noted that there is a significant document explaining the "Phoenix Way" and what this mission statement actually means in practice. It would be the same for the Alliance. The mission statement would give only an overview of the purpose and expectations for the organization. Much more information would have to be included in other documents and other sources.

Next, we presented a "straw man" mission statement as a starting point for discussion.

Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance  
"Working Together for Safer Communities"

There was some discussion about what a mission statement should be. Some members of the group felt that a short slogan-type statement does not convey enough information and that a more fully descriptive mission statement should be maintained. Others agreed with this approach but were not sure that the "straw man" mission statement was the appropriate statement for the Alliance.

In the time allowed, the group was not able to reach a consensus on what the Alliance's mission statement should be. There did appear to be a strong consensus among the city manager/township administrators that "return on investment" should be emphasized in measuring the value of the Alliance to its members. The proposed statement that received the most attention and discussion was:

Provide cost-effective services to member fire departments.

While we did not come out of the process with a new mission statement, we did come to understand that the city managers will concentrate very heavily on cost-savings when doing an evaluation of the Alliance in the future. This is, of course, important information to have. Fire chiefs, while recognizing the importance of cost-savings from the Alliance, also recognized that the Alliance has many operational benefits and strengths. They felt these should also be given recognition in any evaluation process.

## **Potential Options for the Future:**

The final segment of this planning session addressed what duties the Alliance should perform in the future and what responsibilities it should have. We were looking at three to five years down the road. When given the following options to choose from, and utilizing a consensus process, the options were ranked according to “Difficulty of Implementation” and “Return on Investment.” The full results of this ordering are included in the chart on the last page of this report.

**Note: The numbers and order of the items below does not fully signify ranking or the importance of each item. The numbers are only included to make reference to the attached chart more easily understandable.**

- (1) Oversee/Coordinate WMD/Homeland Security Processes
- (2) Oversee/Coordinate Entry Level Testing
  - Standardized/Common Written Test
  - Single/Regional Hiring List
- (3) Coordinate/Conduct Regional Strategic Planning and Implementation Processes
  - Regional Communications Strategies
  - Mutual Aid and AMAR’s
  - Regional Incident Command Standardization
- (4) Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team
  - New Alliance Standing Committee
  - Colocation, Direction and Support Services
- (5) Regional Training
  - Facilities Development Coordination
  - Program Development and Scheduling
  - Training Library/Resource
  - Maintain/Expand Partnership with Sinclair CC
- (6) Provide/Coordinate Public Information/Education Functions
- (7) Maintain Flexibility to Respond to Changing Environment
  - Research and Development Coordination
  - On-Going Strategic Planning, e.g., Continual Monitoring, Annual Reviews, Regular Updates, etc.
- (8) Colocation of Emergency Service Agencies
  - Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team
  - Miami Valley/Montgomery County Emergency Management Authority
- (9) Oversee/Coordinate Human Resource Functions
  - Information/Resource for Smaller Departments/ Communities with Minimal HR Support
- (10) Oversee/Coordinate Ongoing Health and Wellness Program
  - Common Standards of Performance
  - Rehabilitation Programs
  - Coordinate CISM/EAP Programs

- (11) Oversee/Coordinate Code Enforcement Functions
  - Common Fire Codes/Ordinances
  - Coordinated Enforcement/Information Sharing
- (12) Oversee/Coordinate Local Emergency/Support Resources
  - Miami Valley Local Rescue Response Teams
  - Regional Fire Investigation Unit
- (13) Regional Information Source
  - Where The Public Turns For Fire/EMS Information
  - Where Fire Departments Go For Regional Information
- (14) Oversee/Coordinate Entry Level Testing
  - Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT)
- (15) Assist Member Departments in Accreditation Processes
  - Hazard Identification/Evaluation Processes
  - Regional Standard of Coverage
  - Regional Cooperation/Meeting of Accreditation Requirements
- (16) Emergency Management Authority/Agency
  - New Alliance Standing Committee
  - Colocation, Direction and Support Services
- (17) Represent Member Departments/Communities
  - MMRS Committee
  - EMS Council

Obviously, those options with the greatest “Return on Investment” and the least “Difficulty of Implementation” should be the highest priority for implementation. Two items fell clearly into this category – *Oversee/Coordinate WMD/Homeland Security Processes* and *Dayton Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team (Colocation, direction and support)*. One item clearly fell at the opposite end of the spectrum – *Emergency Management Authority/Agency (Colocation, direction and support)*. The item can be ruled out as an appropriate function of the Alliance anytime in the immediate future.

## **Summary**

We started this planning process to gather information to make it possible to develop a relevant strategic plan for the Alliance. I believe we have done just what we set out to do. I have much more information about expectations and potential opportunities than I had when we started out.

I will now work with the Executive Committee to more fully develop the ideas that came out of this process, integrate them with the relevant sections of the previous strategic plan, and develop a strategic plan and an implementation plan for the Alliance for the next three-to-five years.

I want to thank everyone who has participated in the process to this point.

I believe the Alliance can have a bright future, but that future is dependent on the active participation of all member departments and member chiefs in the next few years. I look forward to working with you as we help develop the Alliance of the future.

Below is a list of participants in this planning session:

Michael Herrlein .....	Facilitator
Michael Caudill.....	Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance
Jackie Leland .....	Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance
David Fulmer .....	Miami Township Fire Department
Ron Casey .....	Harrison Township Fire Department
Charles Ford.....	Huber Heights Fire Department
Charlie Wiltrout .....	Butler Township Fire Department
Roy Mann.....	Jefferson Township Fire Department
Larry Collins .....	Dayton Fire Department
Marlyn Flee.....	Harrison Township
John Wright.....	Brookville
Greg Hanahan .....	Miami Township
Mike Ratcliff.....	Greater Dayton Area Mayors and Managers Assn.

# MIAMI VALLEY FIRE/EMS ALLIANCE

## Strategic Planning

### OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Return on Investment		Difficulty to Implement				
		Easy/ Little Difficulty	Moderately Difficult			Significantly Difficult
High		(1) WMD/Homeland Security Processes			(2) Entry-Level Testing (Standardized/Common Written Test)	(3) Regional Strategic Planning and Implementation Processes
		(4) Dayton Regional Hazmat Response Team		(5) Regional Training		
		(6) Public Information/Education	(7) Maintain Flexibility to Respond to Changing Environment	(8) Colocation of Emergency Service Agencies (9) Human Resource Function (10) Health and Wellness Program	(11) Code Enforcement Function	(12) Local Emergency/Support Resources
		(13) Regional Information Source	(14) Entry Level Physical Ability Testing (CPAT)		(15) Assist in Accreditation Process	(16) Emergency Management Agency
Minimal		(17) Represent Member Departments/Communities				